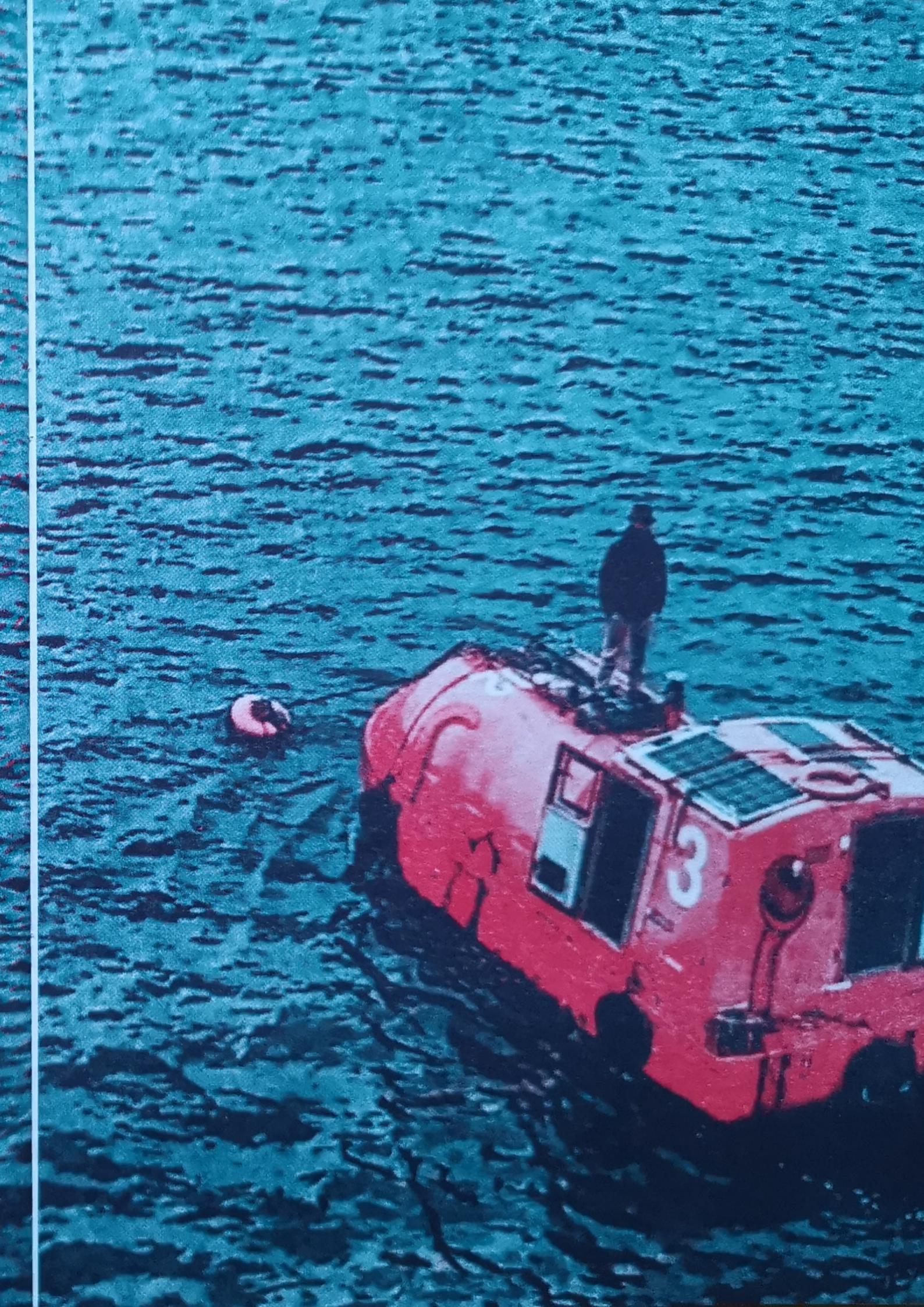
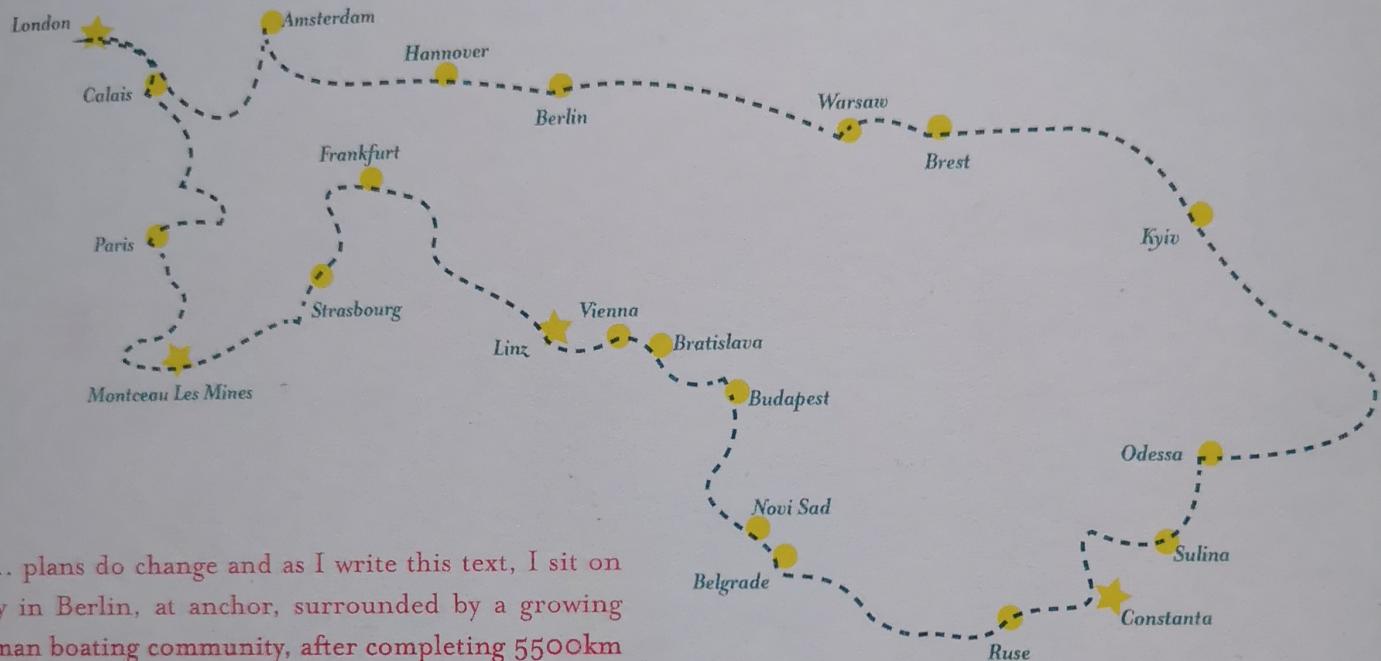


from
london
to the
black
sea



“Crossing Europe on a refurbished lifeboat, from a Scottish oil platform, was not what I had in mind when I decided to settle in, buy a flat in London and adopt a cat four years ago.”



But... plans do change and as I write this text, I sit on a bay in Berlin, at anchor, surrounded by a growing German boating community, after completing 5500km from London to Sulina, on the Romanian Black Sea, throughout 8 different rivers, 18 canals, 9 countries and 501 locks.

The lifeboat in question was bought empty, with only 61 seatbelts and portions of food and water to survive on the water for a couple of weeks. It had been sitting on a North Sea oil platform for 11 years, as Lifeboat no.3, never used, and was going to be discarded or broken up.



It was instead refurbished into a London liveaboard with the intention of bigger adventures due to its sea nature, with a bed, woodburner, toilet, a sea anchor and lots of ballast under the floor in order to replicate the weight of the 61 people the boat had been designed to carry to safety, which would make her more stable and deeper on the water to cross the many low bridges along the London canals.

This was the point I was introduced to “Milda - the lifeboat” and when I slowly started to shift from a flat dweller to boat life.

The list of things to do was though still a long one, as I later understood always is on a boat! To build a kitchen, do all the plumbing, add some storage, more insulation, build a shower, add some portholes, electrical connections, to name just a few...

As work on the boat progressed, the research started regarding the big European Adventure. Required paperwork to first cross the English Channel and then for each of the countries, research on seaports, tides, licenses and of course the route ahead! We got a map of European rivers and started to trace a course. Made some trial runs, first to the Thames and then to the Medway to get the feeling for the sea. Contacted the Coast Guard and got as much advice as we could from other fellow boaters.

For the sea crossing, a bit more preparation was required. Mostly to fasten everything down! The solar panels to the roof, woodburner to the floor, tool boxes to the walls.

The English Channel can be very unpredictable and even with the '3-day good weather window' that we've patiently waited for, we could be caught in a storm that most probably would turn the boat over.

Slowly and steady the boat was getting ready. Myself? Well... When I noticed, I was crossing the English Channel on a lifeboat with a huge cargo ship far ahead that looked just like a fighting vehicle taken from Star Wars!

We left England on the 20th of June 2016, from Ramsgate, at 5.30am in the morning to take advantage of the tide. We sailed along the coast all the way to Dover, where we turned to Calais. Not before we were stopped by an English gunboat asking who we were, and where we were heading to. We're going to France!!!

To be continued

